



# see/saw

home issue 1  
spring 2011





# home

"Perhaps home is not a place but simply an irrevocable condition."

James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*

"The desire to go home that is a desire to be whole, to know where you are, to be the point of intersection of all the lines drawn through all the stars, to be the constellation-maker and the center of the world, that center called love. To awaken from sleep, to rest from awakening, to tame the animal, to let the soul go wild, to shelter in darkness and blaze with light, to cease to speak and be perfectly understood."

Rebecca Solnit, *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes for Politics*

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# see/saw

See/Saw is a new literary magazine produced by San Francisco Art Institute graduate students selected as one of four collaborative projects for the new Diego CoLabs grant in Fall 2016. Initially starting with five founding collaborators, each collaborator provided 1 photograph and 1 piece of writing that another collaborator responded to with the opposite form (responding to photography with writing and responding to writing with photography). All collaborators worked to launch a new graduate publication using their skills, experience, and passion to create a sustainable, ongoing, and flexible platform for open expression and collective dialogue. The artists see this method of interpretation, inspiration, and artistic response as truly collaborative and an exciting way to initiate something with a potential future legacy that can evolve over time as different collaborators leave their mark on the publication for years to come.

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# collaborators

Guramrit Kaur – Treasurer

Teddi Meislahn – Editor

Desiree Rios – Designer

Chu Wang – Publicist

Aaron Wilder – Project Manager



***"Home" is about Flavors***

Chu Wang

"What's your favorite food?"

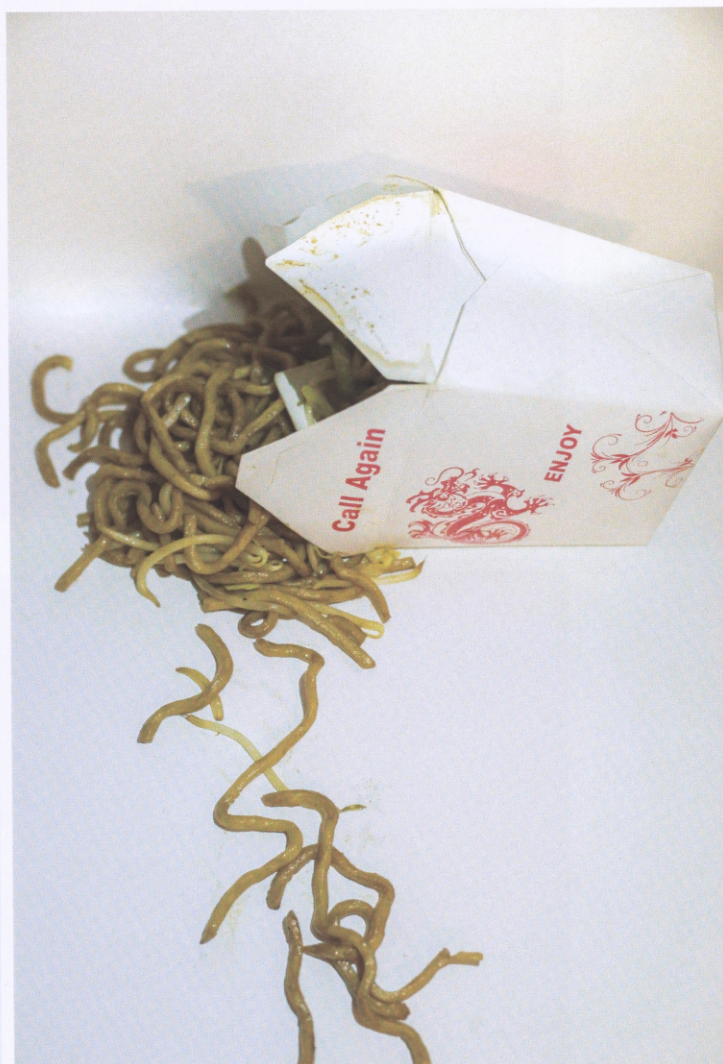
I use to ask this question when I would meet new friends. The majority of the answers were identical; "homemade" seemed to be on the top of people's list. A meal stewed with the ambience of home can accommodate an atmosphere of geniality. I once asked a friend the same question, he told me that his favorite food was the leftovers from the night before, which his mother would mix up in a bowl, then leaves in the fridge. In essence, the attraction of homemade food, does not come from gastrology or taste, but the casualty and comfort it releases.

It was a windy day when I wandered in Chinatown with my Fujifilm Klass S. I waited to capture street miracles, while tourists continuously in motion passed my sight. An old Chinese man inches up to the display window of a restaurant, rapt in the menu written in both Chinese and English. Most individuals do not realize that people of different nationality, tradition, and cultural beliefs live in a very different reality than their own; as for these individuals, the reality of China is blankness. Everything they see, eat, and buy in Chinatown becomes their illusion of China, and Chinese. As for me, that's not home-made.

A large number of Chinese in San Francisco live in Chinatown. Many of them neither speaks English, nor do they speaks Mandarin. They only speaks Cantonese. Two men of the same nationality, eye to eye, a southern butcher behind a pile of fresh pork, a young man from the north. Their bodies gesticulate, using the universal language to communicate while the dialects become the wall that differentiates the realities of the two.

Before I moved to San Francisco I had an illusion that all Americans were raised on cheeseburgers. We know that is not the reality, and nor do all Chinese grow up eating Chow Mein.





**Take Out**  
Desiree Rios





*An Old Man in Front of Me*  
Chu Wang



***Sad Restaurant Food***

Guramrit Kaur

Date – August 15, 2015

Indian Independence Day

I had just moved to San Francisco

I waited eagerly for the Indian restaurant to deliver food.

1 Dal Makhni

2 Naan

1 Diet Coke

1 Kheer

Dal Makhni is my favourite thing to eat.

I was excited.

It turned out tasting like it was heated from a can.

This made me sad.

I was homesick.



### ***Recipe For Pancakes***

Teddi Meislahn

Making pancakes from box mix could be considered a grave sin in my family. Not once in my life did my mother ever pull out of a box of Bisquick and start preparing breakfast. No, that would never happen in my mother's house. Instead, every Sunday after morning church, my mother would pull out that worn out red and white cookbook, flip to the recipe for pancakes and start gathering the ingredients to make the batter. I never understood why my mother would pull that cookbook each week. Surely after several decades of cooking the same recipe over and over again she knew the recipe by heart. One Sunday after church, I sat at our kitchen counter, watching her pull out the cookbook again, and asked her why she did that every Sunday. She looked up from the page at me and simply said, "I don't know really. This is was the same cookbook my mom would use to make me and my siblings pancakes from." That's when I realized there was more in the recipe of making these pancakes than sugar and eggs.

#### **Favorite Pancakes:**

- 1 ¼ cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 beaten egg
- 1 cup milk

Sift together dry ingredients. Combine egg and milk; add to dry ingredients, stirring just till moistened. Bake on hot griddle. Makes about 12 dollar-size, or eight 4-inch pancakes.

\*For thinner pancakes, add 2 tablespoons milk to batter.





*Obsessive Pancaking*  
Guramrit Kaur





*Where is Home?*

Aaron Wilder



***A CORNER UNDERGROUND***

Chu Wang

On the

First day of his death,

He wondered in this brilliantly illuminated world of hope.

Regrettably, he who is a dead spirited

is bounded to be apart

from the world's flavors and colors

which he had not yet tasted or seen.

He, who missed the last bus to redemption will wonder like a fallen angel.

The sun will sprinkle, on and through him

But he will still be a bitter fruit.

The rain will drop, on and through him

But he will still be a perished soul.

He will crumble in the shadows

Where the candles cannot be lit,

No care will ever heal him,

No shelter will ever be strong.

This is a place where the lost ones belong,

A garden that's abandoned

A corner underground.



## **Home**

Guramrit Kaur

Few months ago, when I was moving house I had the opportunity to buy a canopy bed. It has been a dream of mine to have a room within a room, a private sanctuary with thick velvet curtains and warm yellow toned string lights. An unnecessary stack of pillows with satin covers for my hair to fan over while I read books in soft, warm pajama pants and old t-shirts. Comfort goals were right up there with sipping tea by a window on a rainy Sunday afternoon. But, did I buy the canopy bed? No.

Instead I bought a cheaper bed from a classmate.

I've been somewhat of a nomad since 2011. I have travelled a lot and slept in some very questionable beds. I have flown from one city to another and now from one country to another. I have lived in far too many houses where my days were numbered. My roots seem to be drying up but my wings are getting stronger. I do have a longing to find a home, in person, in a place and even within myself but I feel undecided. Do I want a home or do I need it?

I do see a canopy bed in my future. It is a grand ol' thing of beauty and it lives in a house I will call 'home' someday.





*Undecided*  
Aaron Wilder





*Home*

Guramrit Kaur



## ***Don't You Ever Stay Still?***

Desiree Rios

### **Maryland – Bassinet**

My parents are living in a tiny one-bedroom apartment outside of Washington D.C. Unable to afford a crib, they purchase a bassinet where I will occasionally nap and play. From home videos I see myself holding a soaked, half eaten cookie that I must have been gumming on. The bassinet is large, but for the most part I sleep alongside my mother.

### **Texas – King Bed**

I find comfort lying between my parents. On warm nights I sleep outside of their blanket and rest each of my legs on their sides. I flip my pillow over and stretch out my arms, searching for a cool relief.

### **Texas - Full Bed**

This will be the bed I sleep in for the next 17 years. The paint from the headboard has been chipping away for some time. At age ten I will carve out my initials, DR, with my fingernail.

### **New York – Twin Bed**

I have chosen a yellow comforter with magenta sheets. In my mind they compliment each other. I just met my new roommate. She will eventually become my greatest friend.

### **Rome – Twin Bed**

I can smell burning sage from the window. This building houses Venetian priests and Catholic college students. My new roommate encourages me to go to church with her. She is a better person than I will ever be.

### **Spain – Cot**

There are three girls in a room. My cot is in the middle. On a slow night we will sing 80s R&B while drinking red wine. The cleaning women will find these bottles of wine under the cots the next morning. We will each be given a violation.

### **France – Bunk Bed**

I call top bunk. The feeling of something hovering over me makes me uncomfortable. From the end of the bed I can see Parisian rooftops out the window.

### **Queens – Twin**

I now live with three guys. One is a friend, the other two are acquaintances. All I ask is for help when cleaning. I sound like my mother.

### **Colombia – Hostel Single Bed**

I am sad, but I am relieved. I am angry, so I hate him. We have known each other for three years and have been traveling throughout South America for a month. I was never a factor when he planned his future. This will be the last time I see him.

### **Back to Queens - Twin Bed**

The window air conditioning unit is on high. The summers in New York are unbearable but he makes it all the more exciting. Last night we took a train to Coney Island and woke up on the beach. Now he rests his burned back on my bed.

### **Back to Texas - Full Bed**

This is only temporary. I need to get up, get motivated. I don't want to stay here long. My restless mind hears California calling my name.

### **California - Air Mattress**

We made the move together, or did he feel forced? I question if this was the right decision. As we try to get comfortable, the mattress is deflating. 1600 miles ago we packed up the dogs and drove west.

### **California- Queen Mattress**

After a year of sleeping on a queen mattress on the floor, we finally purchased a bed frame and a box spring. As a birthday present he surprised me with a plush, white comforter, something I have always wanted. Our apartment continues to fill with more things to make this place a home. Although I know I will eventually move again...





*Which Way Ought I Go From Here?*  
Teddi Meislahn



Fifty Nifty  
Aaron Wilder

Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas,

I love the poorly educated.

California, Colorado, Connecticut,

The point is, you can never be too greedy.

Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii,

I'm oblivious to a person's gender when it comes to hiring people and handing out assignments.

Idaho, Illinois, Indiana,

A total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering.

Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine,

I think Islam hates us.

Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan;

I think if this country gets any kinder or gentler, it's literally going to cease to exist.

Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana,

I would bring back waterboarding and I'd bring back a hell of a lot worse than waterboarding.

Nebraska, Nevada,

I will build a great, great wall on our southern border, and I will make Mexico pay for that wall.

New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York,

They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists.

North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio,

My fingers are long and beautiful, as, it has been well documented, are various other parts of my body.

Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina,

You could see there was blood coming out of her eyes, blood coming out of her, wherever.

South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas,

You may get AIDS by kissing.

Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington,

I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot people and I wouldn't lose voters.

West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming.

I will absolutely apologize, sometime in the hopefully distant future, if I'm ever wrong.





*Untitled (Texas Series)*  
Desiree Rios



***Copenhagen Long Cut Straight***

Teddi Meislahn

Copenhagen Long Cut Straight. That is the smell of my father. I smell it as he hits the can against his left thumb, pops it open, and puts a small piece of the dip in his lower lip. He does this while driving us home in his faded maroon S-10 pickup truck. The windows are rolled down letting the fresh air come through; yet all I smell is Copenhagen Long Cut Straight. He is wearing his cowboy hat that was once a nice cream color, but has begun to turn yellow from years of wear. "What do you know Bub?" my father asks me, then spits into an empty Diet Mt. Dew can. The Thunder Rolls playing on the radio. "Nothing much daddy-o", I retort back. We pass endless pastures filled with herds of cows gathered by the barbed wire fences. The smell of manure wafts in and out as we drive past. Yet, I still smell Copenhagen Long Cut Straight. I still smell the scent of my father.



***Delivered Under the Similitude of a Dream***

Aaron Wilder

God willing, you will become a valiant warrior for Jesus Christ.

Remember to bloom, not just grow where you're planted.

Huge shift in priorities.

What do you see, hear, feel?

Indeed, you are a precious gift from God.

What a great opportunity I had to show my love for you in Sedona when you threw up all over me.

He provides the ultimate model for me to follow.

Have a great year - I know you will as you build upon all the lessons and life God has blessed you with.

Your spiritual birthday will soon be here, March 24th. You will be five years a Christian. Can you believe how time flies?

A strong urgency to support persecuted believers worldwide.

Religion should be more like falling in love than words, rules, going through the motions.

You grew stronger on Wednesday night as you learned of God's love in His church.

Looking forward I see a continuing drift away from God in the West with its accompanying slide toward the consequences.

Things will get harder before there will be any improvement.

Live life to the fullest everyday because each one is a gift from God.

What do I feel?

You are every bit a boy.

As I pray each day, I remember you in my conversations with the maker of heaven and earth.

Things happen for a reason.





*Grace Cathedral*  
Teddi Meislahn



At the circus you spent more time looking at the crowd behind us than at the performance.

Everyone makes mistakes. Do your best not to repeat them.

I remember Christmas, the best one ever, because there has never been so much Christ in my Christmas.

I hear the same voice, but telling a different story with a new direction.

Carelessness with money is not a good trait.

Adversity is one of God's best devices to remind us that we are weak and he is strong.

The joy of the lord is our strength.

Time will tell.

Broken relationships, poor economy, and a deteriorating environment.

Stay out of debt. Save. God will honor your faithfulness.

Cast all your anxiety upon the lord for he cares for you.

You paid particular attention to the bats on our North Mountain hikes.

There are many road signs on the highway to heaven.

As I spend more time in the Word of God, I am getting a clearer picture of what love is, what it looks like from a heavenly point of view.

Sing with gusto and tell someone about the love of God.

I was looking at our baptism certificates the other day as I consider rejoining North Phoenix Baptist Church.

I remember sharing Christ, His love, His life, and His word every day.

It is only through many trials and much suffering that we enter the kingdom of God.

Keep singing, or, in my case, make a joyful noise to the lord.

He loves us even though we are not very lovable.



Too few people give a rip about the state of the world and that is sad considering what a mess it is in.

Isn't it weird how life's unexpected twists and turns take us to unexpected places? Some good and some not so good.

I hope you show the tree-hugging democrats what it means to be strong and true, true to the one who made you.

Jesus said a lot about giving. He's the ultimate gift, you know.

The writer talks about the sins of the nation and the forgiveness of God.

This is the day that the lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.

What are you giving away this year?

There are only a few things in life that are really worth having. The first is a personal relationship with God through his only begotten son, Jesus the Christ.

Looking for evidence of God.

I pray that God would be the most important person in your life. Anything less than daily devotion could only break his heart.

I pray that God will keep you from the evil one.

So much to give and so little time to give it.

I can't always tell how or what he is doing but I know the outcome: a blessing for his children.

I have you on my mind but I am likely to blow it when it comes to a calendar at some point.

I ran into a most interesting gentleman in the parking lot. Sounds a bit strange talking to a marine about my kid's future. I would like to talk with him further.

Looking back, what do I see?

I see with new eyes what a real love affair with God looks like.

I pray that he will lead me to provide you with the spiritual environment that points you to eternal fellowship with him.



You warm my soul and break my heart.

Being a Christian means being different.

I was walking on the beach while all the time my feet were propped up on the desk here where I am writing to you. Next I found myself in someone else's house.

You seemed to sail through our family breakup unscathed (as long as you had plenty of toys to play with).

It seems that we have forgotten how to save for a rainy day. We would rather borrow on time and have it now. This presumes upon God and one day time will run out and it won't be good.

Work hard in all you do because it is the lord who you are really working for.

I was digging through my big box of blessings and found more than I could handle.

I know things will be different and I also know that God never changes so we can rest assured that he will take care of us because he loves us.

Nothing can separate you from God's love and my love too.

Pursue that which the lord has blessed you with: those gifts and talents such as mercy, intellect, patience, creativity, literary skill, and compassion.

All things work together for good for those who love God.

I remember your mom telling me how passionate you were telling others what had happened in your life.

Be strong in the lord.

We say that on the phone, but I want you to know that my love for you is not just three words at the end of a conversation like a period is at the end of a sentence.

In the Song of Solomon I am reminded that loving God is only possible in response to understanding just how much he loves us.

Stay focused on Jesus and God will multiply your blessings so your cup will over flow.

Am I ready?

What do you see ahead?







**N. Crump**

Desiree Rios

**"You got a long tail?"** My grandfather sarcastically asked just before I greeted him. As a child I always took this question literally and didn't quite understand it but instinctively knew when he asked this it meant to close the door behind me as I walk into the small manufactured home. Pepo never wanted to waste the icy air coming from the window air conditioning unit. The door had aluminum foil taped to both sides of its glass center, as did most of the windows throughout the house. This was an effective way of blocking out direct sunlight and keeping the house from overheating, typically seen in older homes throughout the South. Most of my childhood, especially during the triple digit degree summers, was spent at my grandparents' home while my parents worked.

Because the door was always closed the house was always dim. The only light available came through the kitchen window. Old and unreliable. It was held up by a wooden stick to let in whatever breeze there was. My cousins and I were inside only when my grandmother, my Memo, would say it was too hot to be out.

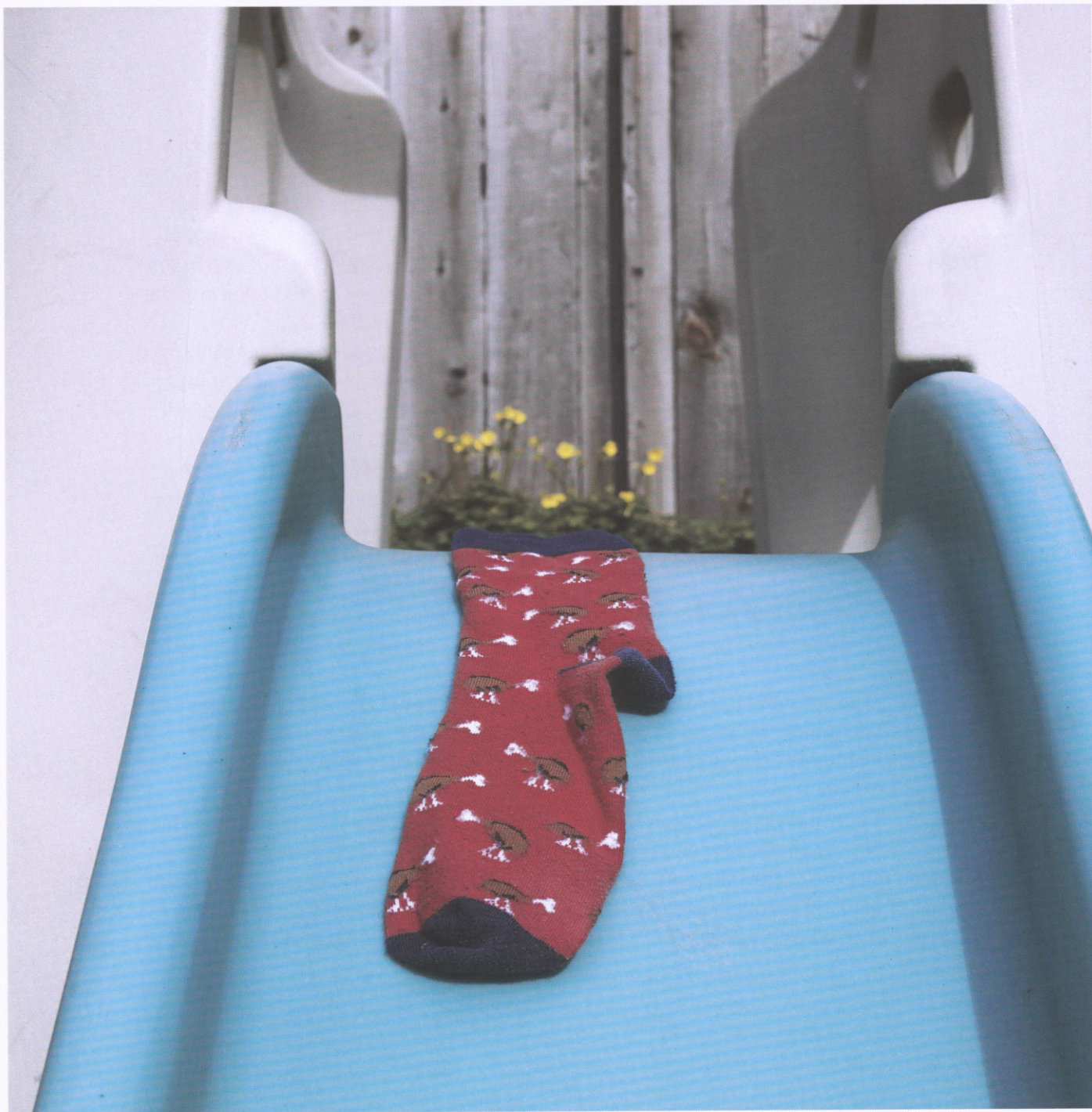
The floors all through the rooms were different. Not only could it be seen, but also felt. The carpet in the living room had been walked on so much that it had embedded itself into the hard flooring underneath. The kitchen had custard yellow linoleum tile. The sharp edges from a torn piece would pierce the ball of my foot as I chased my cousins around the table. I did my best to remember to leap over, but in those moments of adrenaline when I was on a mission to reach out to tag a cousin so that I didn't have to be *it* anymore, I would forget. If I ever cried from the sharp sensation, the first question Memo would ask was, **"Where are your socks?"**

I rarely kept my socks on. Once Pepo got home from work they no longer became my socks. They were ammunition. I would hear metallic rustling from the aluminum foil, turn away from watching whichever Disney VHS my cousins and I decided to play, and see Pepo walk in through the doorway. **"What are y'all watching weccos?"** He would step over us to put his lunchbox on the table in the kitchen. Then he would disappear to one of the back rooms to change.

How could we have let our guard down? The creaking of the floor should have given him away. While our eyes were fixed to the television set, Pepo would fold his white athletic sock into itself, forming a ball, and would aim straight for one of our distracted faces. Before ever having the chance to react we would hear a full belly laugh. **"Pow! Right in the kisser!"**

Pepo always hid behind his spot, the wall that led to the hallway. As we waited for his face to reappear, we would take off our own socks to roll. We dodged, threw, missed, and hit each other. The game ended when everybody's socks couldn't be found anymore.





*Sock*  
Chu Wang



Memo would eventually have to wrangle up the isolated sock balls as she cleaned. She spent most of her time in the kitchen. Washing dishes and making meals. Very traditional. I would brag to others that her specialty was fried chicken, but that may be because it was my favorite. Not only did the home fill with the smell of hot oil, but outside as well. The chicken bubbled and browned in Crisco just like our skin in the Texas heat. When there were just enough drumsticks and chicken breasts piled into the yellow Tupperware bowl, Memo would tell me to grab a paper plate.

We always ate from paper plates. The grease that dripped from the freshly fried chicken would cause the Styrofoam to corrode away. Our paper plates almost always had holes burned through them. Memo only brought out the glass plates on special occasions like a holiday and sometimes a birthday. These plates were stowed away in the broken down kitchen cabinet. The doors on the cabinet would not remain closed for such a long time. In order to keep them closed, the door handles were tied together with an automobile bungee cord with hooks on each end.

These characteristics made this her kitchen. No other kitchen like it. She never portrayed a feeling of being forced to reside in the kitchen. It was her haven. Sometimes I would walk into the kitchen and find her sitting in silence, deep in thought. Content. She would pull up a chair to the entranceway between the living room and the kitchen to watch TV.

Pepo still dominates the remote. It's always the same: Old western movies and shows. Even though he would be asleep through most of the programming, he had a strange sixth sense as soon as we tried to pick up the remote to change the channel, he would wake up.

It was and always is, his television. Just like it was his chair, the king's chair. The king's chair was an old leather recliner that had been torn in several places and had an indentation at the back of the seat. Only while Pepo was away could I lounge in the chair. Most of the time I couldn't get it to recline. I complained and once told him it was broken when he was home. ***"That's because that ain't yo' chair. That's the Kiiiiing's Chair."***







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